

**RHODE ISLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

**MEETING OF THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

**PUBLIC SESSION**

**March 26, 2009**

The first meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce Commission (the Commission) was held on Thursday, March 26, 2009 in Public Session in the offices of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, 315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101, Providence, Rhode Island pursuant to notice of the meeting to all Members and public notice of meeting, a copy of which is attached hereto, as required by applicable Rhode Island Law.

The following Members were present and participated throughout the meeting as indicated: Armeather Gibbs, Chair; J. Michael Saul; Robert Shea; Rep. Joseph Almeida; Eileen Farley; William McGowan; Diane St. Laurent; Leslie Taito; Paul Harrington; Christopher Wissmann.

Members absent were Rep. Gordon Fox; Sandra Powell; Sen. Daniel Connors.

Also attending the meeting were Governor Carcieri, staff of the members of the General Assembly and RIEDC and members of the general public. Ms. Gibbs presided over the meeting.

**Welcome**

Ms. Gibbs called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. by welcoming everyone and asking the Commissioners to introduce themselves. After the introductions, Governor Carcieri thanked the Commissioners for dedicating their time to this extremely important task. Workforce development is the most fundamental issue facing the state. A qualified, skilled and capable workforce is key to economic development. The Governor cited CCRI as Rhode Island's premier workforce development tool and stated that the school has utilized several good partnerships to increase its capacity to address the state's workforce development needs. He encouraged the Commission to be aggressive, to utilize national models and to think creatively and broadly when developing recommendations to further increase CCRI's ability and capacity to meet the demand.

### **Overview of CCRI**

Ms. Gibbs introduced Dr. Ray DiPasquale, President of CCRI who provided an overview of the school's current profile. With more than 16,000 students, four campuses throughout the state, and more than 80 percent of its graduates employed by Rhode Island companies, CCRI is key to the state's economic growth. Dr. DiPasquale presented detailed information on CCRI's student body/enrollment, academic programs, campus locations, budget (current and historic trends for tuition and fees), alumni and workforce development efforts. Dr. DiPasquale stressed that CCRI must be able to respond to workforce needs without hesitation and pointed to recent industry-driven partnerships that have been successful.

### **Mission, Objectives & Approach/Stakeholder Outreach**

Mr. Julian Alssid, Executive Director of Workforce Strategy Center (WSC) which will facilitate the work of the Commission introduced his firm and presented an overview of the scope of the work the Commission will conduct. WSC works with education, workforce development, and economic development agencies to develop strategies to help students and workers succeed and regional economies grow. Studies have shown that one year of post secondary training can transform a low wage earner into a family supporting earner. President Obama has called for everyone to have this minimum one year of education or training.

For this project, WSC will help the Commission identify specific actions to strengthen CCRI's position as a key institution in Rhode Island's effort to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce prepared for the high-wage jobs of today's knowledge-based economy. Rhode Island has a great foundation and the recommendations will build a framework to connect existing pieces. WSC will work with local and regional partners to raise funding for the project. To date WSC has raised funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Rhode Island Foundation and the United Way of Rhode Island.

Ms. Gibbs emphasized that WSC will use the broadest outreach possible to survey all stakeholders and constituents to insure all voices and ideas are solicited.

### **National Trends/Promising Practices**

Mr. Alssid reviewed similar projects conducted in Ohio and Virginia to demonstrate how those states approached their workforce challenges and the described the initiatives they developed to prepare individuals for their first jobs as well as retrain them for new jobs as skill requirements evolve. Commissioners offered comments suggesting that the Commission 1) leverage models that are currently working 2) focus on scope of work that can be completed in the short tenure of the Commission, and 3) include recommendations to eliminate or replace existing programs that are outdated in order to free resources for programs that are in highest demand.

**Plan of Action/Next Steps**

Commission Chair Gibbs introduced Maureen Bozell of WSC who reviewed the suggested methodology the Commission would embrace to produce a set of recommendations. WSC is currently conducting a gap analysis of the high-wage industries that have been identified by RIEDC as requiring postsecondary credentialing and will present these findings to the Commission. WSC will also work with CCRI to analyze their maximum program capacity. This information with information gathered from stakeholders will be used by the Commission to define preliminary findings and direction for the recommendations. WSC will then produce a draft and then a final report. Targeted adoption of the set of recommendations and written report is November 2009 with a public release of the printed report in early January.

Commissioners requested that any recent workforce reports, such as the Report of the Governor's Workforce Board, be sent to them for study. Commissioners will be polled for future meeting dates and a schedule will be distributed.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

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Christine Smith  
Secretary